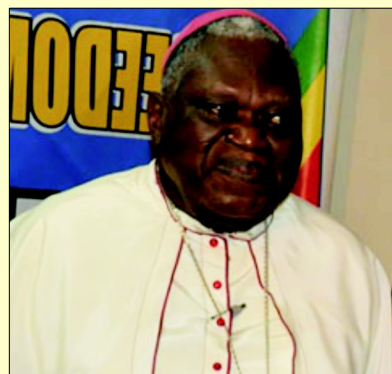


Historical

Insight

Vol 1 No. 6



HISTORY IS CRITICAL FOR GROWTH

ISLAM MEANS PEACE

MISSIONARIES: AGENTS OF CHANGE

DO NOT IGNORE AFRICAN WORLD VIEW

EXPLORE POSITIVE VALUES IN TRADITIONAL CULTURE

A PUBLICATION OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GHANA

PREAMBLE

On 23rd – 24th January 2007, the Historical Society of Ghana (HSG) held a roundtable conference at La Palm Royal Beach Hotel under the theme **THE CHANGING FACES OF RELIGION: TRADITIONAL RELIGION, ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY**. This forms part of their programme for the celebration of Ghana's Golden Jubilee under the general theme **REFLECTIONS ON FIFTY YEARS OF GHANA'S INDEPENDENCE: INTERROGATING THE PAST, SHAPING THE FUTURE**.

So far six (5) roundtable conferences have been organized:

- **Pre-independent Ghana: The People, Colonial Rule and Independence**
- **The Rule of Law: Government and the people**
- **Culture, The Arts and National Identity**
- **Women: Half a Century of Transformation**
- **Conflict Resolution, Peace Building and Mediation**

On the occasion of the roundtable on **The Changing Faces of Religion: Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity** Professor Irene Odotei, a history professor at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon and President of the HSG, gave the introductory remarks. She

welcomed the distinguished personalities, H.E. Flemming Bjørk Pedersen, Danish Ambassador to Ghana and Guest of Honour; Maulvi Wahab Adam, Ameer of the Ahmadiyya Mission in Ghana and Chairman for the opening ceremony; Nii Kpobi Tettey Tsuru II, La Mantse; Rev Dr. Cyril Fayorsey, President of the Trinity Theological Seminary; Rev Kofi Owusu, General Secretary of the Bible Society of Ghana; Rev. Dr. D.N.A. Kpobi, Former Ga Presbytery Chairman; Rev. Dr. B.Y. Quarshie, Head of the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana and other distinguished Reverend Ministers. There was also a significant number of Muslim women leaders representing organisations and associations. Present also were students of the Ghana Lebanon Islamic Secondary School. Traditional religion was represented by Numo Oblafo Akotia Omaetu III, Ga Blafo Wulomo and Nuomo Gbelenfo, Osu Wulomo. Scholars and practitioners presented papers on the following topics; *Traditional Religion; Islam; Messengers to the Heathens: Christian Missions and social change in Ghana before Independence; From Religious Dogma to Religious Charismaticism: Continuities and changes in Religious practice in Ghana; Women in Religion; New Religious Movements: Afrikania Mission; 'On the Negroes' Religion in General' observations of L.F Rømer, an eighteenth Century Danish employee on the Gold Coast.*

What does it teach us about religious leadership?; Religion and State after Independence: An Overview; and Conflict, Peace Building, Unity in Diversity.

There was also a significant presence of renowned scholars and academics at the conference.

At the end of the roundtable conference participants were very happy with the opportunity for open discussions especially since those who had played key roles in the governance of the country were there to share their personal experiences and reflections.

After the conference, the Society was able to follow key participants for interviews that had added to the Historical Society's store of research materials.

Appreciation

We are grateful to Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFUND) for sponsorship of this publication. We want to thank Dr. Sam Gaba for his personal encouragement and “passion” for history. Information was obtained from archival material of the Historical Society of Ghana. We are also grateful to all the chairmen, guests of honours, presenters, participants and technical team of our round table conferences from 2006-2007. This publication would not have been possible without their input. Thank you.

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AMEER CALLS FOR MUTUAL RESPECT IN RELIGION

Maulvi Wahab Adam

The Chairman for the occasion, Maulvi Wahab Adam, urged that “Ghanaians should give thanks to God for His grace and for keeping us alive and healthy to witness the significant event of Ghana's fiftieth anniversary”. He challenged participants to come out with positive recommendations that will help consolidate and improve

upon this, considering the fact that religion is the cause of strife in many parts of the world.

Issues of religion evoke emotions and passions and this therefore call for the need for mutual respect. It is only when we have respect for each other, that we can build a strong, prosperous and happy nation, he noted.



EXPLORE POSITIVE VALUES IN TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Bishop Peter Akwasi Sarpong



The Catholic Archbishop of Kumasi, Bishop Peter Akwasi Sarpong decried the wholesale condemnation of our cultural values by Christians in particular. Strangely, these same “frog-Christians” hopped to consult the traditional priests when it suited them. The result of the abandonment of these values is the moral decadence in society.

In the keynote address read on his behalf by Fr. Michael Mensah, secretary to the Catholic Archbishop of Accra, Bishop Sarpong reiterated the relevance of the theme to Ghana's 50th anniversary celebrations. He



added with satisfaction that religion has played a major role in the nation's development in its fifty years, a role started long before independence.

He gave a historical overview of the three religions – African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity. Traditional religion indigenous to the people of the country held society together, providing its physical as well as spiritual needs. This religion, which he described as very “tolerant”, has no founder, and does not proselytize.

Islam was introduced into the

country by traders from the north. It requires, among other things, from its adherents to know the Koran in Arabic by heart. 1921 witnessed the introduction of the Ahmadiyya Mission which somewhat formalised the provision of health care and other social services particularly formal education to its members.

Christianity was first introduced by the missionaries in the fifteenth century in the Gold Coast. This was, however, not sustained; and the nineteenth century witnessed the second wave of the introduction of Christianity. This was confrontational and fragmentary, and introduced conflicts between the various denominations. The mid-twentieth century saw the emergence of the Pentecostal or charismatic and independent African churches, the thrust of whose message was to seek answers to the problems of daily life. This bridged the gap between the orthodox churches and traditional religion in a search

to find answers to the mysteries of man and the world and a search to answer age-old human enigmas.

In the light of the high incidence of moral decadence, injustice and other vices in the society, he questioned the sincerity of Ghanaians, the majority of whom claim to belong to one religion or the other, in their claim to practice the tenets or virtues of their professed religions. He also wondered why in spite of the various points of convergence between the various faiths, particularly Islam and Christianity, such as the belief in the same Supreme Creator and even the same historical

roots, they are still in conflict. Recalling previous attempts at maintaining religious harmony which included the setting up of a committee in 1970 to produce a textbook on religious education, he highlighted what lessons could be learnt from such an exercise. These include emphasizing what unites rather than divides us such as common beliefs like the power of God, obedience, mercy, justice, and truthfulness. Using his own background as an example he cited his family whose membership included traditionalists, Muslims and Christians. In spite of the diversity, there was harmony. He did not see the

impossibility in the three living in the same way as members of his family do.

He recommended as the way forward a halt to the denigration of other faiths, particularly traditional religion, and rather going back and exploring the positive values in traditional culture such as the deep sense of the sacred and acute sense of solidarity. He called on the new Ghanaian leadership of the Christian churches not to repeat the missed opportunity of the expatriate leadership who, because of their background, failed to appreciate the positive values in our traditional culture.

DANISH AMBASSADOR APPLAUDS ROLE OF RELIGIOUS BODIES IN DEVELOPMENT

The special guest of honour, the Danish Ambassador to Ghana, H.E. Mr. Flemming Bjørk Pedersen, stated that as a partner in Ghana's development efforts, the Danish government recognizes the profound role religious organizations were playing in the socio-economic development of Ghana.

Alluding to provision of health and education, he made the observation that religious organizations in Ghana provide more than forty percent of public health services to the country; and these are highly appreciated, by the Danish government as Ghana's development partner.

He added that religion continues to play a vital role in the growth of society and therefore urged all stakeholders to collaborate in improving and sustaining the various religious groups in the country.

He spoke about the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) specifically I and VIII i.e. the eradication of poverty and global partnership. He stated that democracy and good governance is essential to the achievement of these objectives. And this calls for among other things a "vibrant civil society" to ensure that the basic rights of the people are guaranteed. He commended the religious bodies in this regard.

H.E. Flemming Bjørk Pedersen



As development partner of Ghana and a member of the Human Rights Council, Denmark will continue to cooperate with the country as it has done since 1958. He therefore asked for Ghana's support for his country for the candidacy on the Human Rights Council of the UN so that together both countries can fight to advance the cause of human rights in Africa and the world.

RELIGION CRUCIAL IN NATION'S DEVELOPMENT

Prof. Irene K. Odotei

The President of the Historical Society of Ghana, Prof. Irene Odotei stated that religion is in every aspect of African culture and noted that religion is a way of life for Ghanaians. It is thus, vital in determining the country's development agenda.

She urged that religion flows through the people's customs. It is, hence a way of life. As such, "Religion is in the African world view." This is portrayed by the African belief system as evident in the number of religion-related signposts, slogans and in the language of the people. It is also evident from the numerous religious structures: mosques, shrines and churches that are dotted all over the country.

Therefore, at fifty it is important that we interrogate the past to ensure that religion plays a more positive role in the lives of individuals and promote national development.



Speaking on the topic, '*On the Negroes Religion In General: Observations of L.F. Rømer, an Eighteenth Century Danish Employee on the Gold Coast*, Professor Odotei said this account of the people though biased and very often negative and derogatory provides not only an European's view of the religious beliefs and practices of the people but also the religious nature of the people.

Rømer stated among other things that, it was difficult to write about a religion which according to him was not systematic. The people knew very little about their religion, and the varied opinions of those that did were as distant in

nature from each other, as the East is far from the West. All the people however, knew about a Supreme God who had three subordinates, the Sky, Earth and Sea. The people, according to him, held the belief that the ancestors strengthened the gods. Also the people believed in an evil spirit which he erroneously calls "sisa" (Ga word for ghost). The Devil was said to be white.

Many of the Europeans did not understand the religion of the people. Rømer, in spite of his shortcomings, gives us glimpse of customs some of which are still practised such as the annual festival of the La people. For this reason, Rømer's description of the religion of the people of Ghana in the first half of the eighteenth century gave us a valuable fusion of and insight into change and continuity in religious beliefs and practices as portrayed by the people; because Europeans looked at religion from Eurocentric perspective and backgrounds, she argued.

LEARN FROM YOUR CHURCH HISTORY

Rev. Dr. Quarshie

There is the need for Ghanaians to learn from the experiences of those who brought Christianity to Ghana, says Dr. Quarshie, Head, Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, and a former head of the Ga

Presbytery. He believes that we need to study the history of the church if, indeed, we are to shape the future of the country; because the history of the church is tied to the history and social development of the country. Lessons from the



mistakes of the past and achievements should help to make Christianity more beneficial and adaptable to us, he said.

He also stressed the need to maintain interaction between the Christian faith and the culture of the people. That, would create an environment for stakeholders in the development of culture and religion to collaborate for the improvement of the two sectors.

HISTORY IS CRITICAL FOR GROWTH

Professor R. Addo-Fening, a council member of the HSG, stressed the importance of the knowledge of one's history in the life of a people. As stated by Levi Strauss and Cicero, those who ignore history condemn themselves to not knowing the present, and to forever remaining children. "Without history Ghana can not come to terms with the present because what exists today is a result of events that occurred in the past. Consciousness of the past makes us understand today," he said.

On the significance of the sub-theme, religion, he said it



greatly influences the course of history. In Ghana, it has been an agent of social and political change and it was worth reflecting on its impact on the country in its fifty year history and what lessons could be drawn from it to shape the country's future.

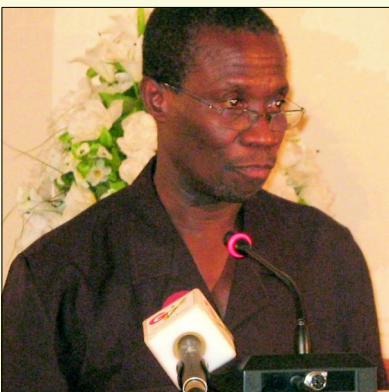
Religion can be likened to a

Professor R. Addo-Fening

double-edged sword that could be used for either good or evil. It has been a major preoccupation of mankind throughout history and has influenced the people of the ancient world: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Palestine and Greece and still continues to influence people in modern times both positively and negatively. It has fired off persecutions, precipitated major wars and determined alliances across nations. It has promoted morality and conditioned governance. Interrogating the past in the light of religions will mean a better appreciation of our religious legacy as a tool to shape the future, he concluded.

LET US PRAY FOR GHANAIS LIVING ABROAD

Rev. Dr. Frimpong



Rev. Dr. Frimpong, former Chaplain to Ghanaian students in the United Kingdom, has called for prayers for Ghanaians living abroad for them to be good ambassadors for the nation. This is very important considering the fact that Ghanaians come from a different background living in a community with liberals, evangelicals etc.

who expound with different values such as homosexuality and gay marriage. This was his appeal after he had shared his experience at the conference.

Rev. Frimpong said it was frightening that Ghanaian students abroad did not have a spiritual base because there were no chaplains to take care of them. Being African and innately religious, Ghanaian students who find themselves in a new

culture with several influences and pull factors are disorientated. He narrated work being done to help Ghanaian students abroad. These include visits to students on campuses, hospitals and prisons to provide counseling and financial assistance. To create a sense of community for these students, meetings are organized on national holidays like independence and republic days for worship.

Though some Ghanaian churches have sprung up in the UK that cater for Ghanaians, he still appealed for prayers for them so they do not fall prey to vices in their host countries.

TRADITIONAL RELIGION NOT ATHEISTIC

Prof. C.R. Gaba



Presenting a paper on Traditional Religion, Prof. C.R. Gaba of Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Coast, defined the religion, its nature and meaning and its relationship with other religious systems.

In defining Traditional Religion, he made it clear that it is not atheistic. He described it as a way of life, adding that it was “tolerant”, polytheistic or what Idowu termed as diffused monotheism because of its belief in one Supreme Being and also its recognition of other spirit forces as messengers of the Most High. It acknowledges the existence of evil forces such as witchcraft and sorcery. Traditionalists, in their worship offer prayers and sacrifice to satisfy both individual and group survival needs. There is the belief that human problems are multi-dimensional and apart from the physical dimensions there is the spiritual angle.

He noted that, the increasing number of absentee chiefs or priests, he noted, is giving rise to the secularisation of traditional religion. This is

because those who are supposed to perform the necessary rites and rituals are not usually available to perform them. The responsibility then devolve upon those not qualified to perform those duties.

Traditional religion has undergone some transformations with the introduction, in the early nineties, of Osofo Okomfo Damuah's Afrikania Mission which sought to formalise traditional worship. Though some have predicted the end of traditional religion, its resilience will ensure its survival in the future. He appealed to practitioners of other religions to learn to cope with and tolerate others as traditional religion has done over the years to guarantee peace in society. He also charged religious leaders to engage in ecumenical discussions as partners in any human society do.

Commenting on the paper Prof. Mercy Oduyoye expressed the view that it was time traditionalists were made to speak for themselves at such fora as most often than not presenters on traditional religion were not practitioners of that religion. This would enhance the appreciation of the religion coming from an insider.

Dr. Ababio questioned the appropriateness of the tag African Traditional religion to the indigenous religion of the

people since in his view the other religions such as Christianity and Islam could also be said to be traditional to Africa. Furthermore, as there was no such thing as European Traditional Religion or Asian Traditional Religion he suggested a more apt name be coined for the religion.

Mrs. Elizabeth Akpalu of Advocacy for Gender Equity called for a critical examination of the blame laid on women for the cause of sin. Numo Blafo III however, absolved traditional religion from this charge stating that rather it was the religions introduced into Africa that are to blame. Women play very important roles in traditional religion as deities or priestesses. Even God is believed to be both male and female; hence the name “*Attanaa Nyonmo*” Ga.

On whether the number of traditionalists was dwindling, it was argued that since traditional religion does not proselyte, it could not be measured in terms of numbers. According to Dr. Wilhelmina Donkoh in her interview with the Nsumankwahene of the Asantehene he said that though people might profess to be Christians, they still consulted the traditionalists in times of trouble. The practices of these people described by Bishop Sarpong as “frog-Christians” was just the expression of the innate traditional beliefs of the African.

It was suggested by Dr. Asamoah that the beliefs and practices of traditional religion

should be documented. Since these were only handed down orally they were subject to being distorted or lost completely. He also recommended revisiting how traditional religion helped to preserve the environment and taking a cue in this time of environmental degradation, which is a threat to the survival of mankind.

ISLAM MEANS PEACE

Sheikh Dr. Mark Sey

Islam is a peaceful religion and a way of life which demands the complete submission to the will of Allah, says Sheikh Dr. Mark Sey, Department Of Religious Studies, University of Cape Coast.

In a brief historical overview of Islam, he traced its founding to AD 610. It came to Africa in AD 614 when, during the persecution of Muslims in Arabia, the Prophet asked his followers to go and seek refuge with the Ethiopian Emperor. It has been in Ghana since the fifteenth century with the settling of some Muslims of Malian origin at Begho in the present day Brong Ahafo region. From there it was introduced into the northern parts of the country, first to Gonjaland in 1585, its first convert being Mawur; then to Dagbon under Naa Zagini by Mohammed Al-Kashinawi from Hausaland. Muslims who formed the educated class in Asante in the eighteenth and nineteenth century served in various positions, particularly as scribes, traders and medicinemen to several Asantehene, notably Nana Osei Kwame and Nana Kwaku Dua. This group, popularly referred to as “*Asantenkramo*”



still play an important role in the Asantehene's palace. Islam came to the south, precisely Fanteland, in the nineteenth century through the work of Muslim soldiers recruited by Captain Glover to fight in the Sagrenti War in the 1870s. Benjamin Sam, a Methodist catechist converted to Islam, was very instrumental in its spread in Fanteland. The arrival of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in 1921 in Saltpond introduced a new dimension to the spread of Islam with the establishment of schools.

He added that the relationship between the state and Islam has always been friendly, citing the roles of Muslims as advisors to Kwame Nkrumah on several important issues such as the Akosombo dam and the participation of the President in the last Eid festivities. He recommended that this should be

strengthened and called on practitioners of Islam and other religions to maintain a peaceful coexistence.

50 YEARS OF ISLAM: AN “OUTSIDER'S” PERSPECTIVE

Rev Nathan Iddrisu Samwini



Rev. Dr. Nathan Iddrisu Samwini of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi presented his study of Islam from an outsider's perspective i.e. a Christian's perspective.

On the history of Islam in the north, he said it was difficult to separate the history of the states in the north from Islam as the earlier founders of these kingdoms, such as Dagbon and Gonja, were converted to Islam. The Muslims adopted the culture of the people and adapted Islam to the local culture which in turn has resulted in about thirty percent of the vocabulary of these states being Arabic. Examples include Wale and Gruni (Frafra). In the southern parts, largely through the work of returnee freed slaves from Brazil popularly known as the Tabon, Islam was introduced in Accra. In Nzemaland the work of one J.K. Ackah in the 1800s was very influential in this regard.

Muslims have been very active in the social and economic life of the country, working as health providers and providing labour in the mines and plantations. Politically, they were also active participants in the independence struggle. However, as earlier noted they let themselves down by failing to take advantage of Western education. So as though they gained Islamic education in the Koranic schools, they were unable to gain employment as this prepared them for their spiritual advancement rather than for the job market. The situation is, however, improving as more are gaining formal Western education.

Whilst expressing regret that Christians have also been drawn into doctrinal controversies with Muslims resulting in violent clashes, he stressed that cooperation between Muslims and

Christians has been cordial, citing as examples the sitting together on various inter-religious bodies to dialogue and also in the education on HIV/AIDS and environmental cleanliness.

He concluded that Islam has grown in Ghana because whereas there was only one identifiable Muslim group in Ghana in the early 1990s there are many now after 50yrs of independence, and this number continues to grow.

Responding to a question as to whether religious conflicts could be attributed to foreign influences, Dr. Samwini agreed this was true to some extent as those educated abroad in Muslim countries tended to impose their brand of Islam when they returned. Fundamentalism, however, it was acknowledged, was not limited to Islam.

however, over time, gradually changed as people were converted to Christianity and also adopted the same Eurocentric attitude towards traditional beliefs and practices. This ambivalence towards Christianity is evident in the speeches of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah who just after independence paid glowing tribute to the work of Christian missionaries who had lost their lives trying to spread the gospel in the country. He was later to castigate them for deceit and exploitation of the African people.

The missionaries, he noted, increased social capital that dramatically transformed the lives of the people and changed their class status by improving agricultural production, technological advancement etc. He was speaking on the topic, *Messengers to the Heathens: Christian Missions and Social Change before Independence*.

Christian missions were at the forefront in the fight for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery, thereby bringing freedom to many. This had an effect on the peace and stability enjoyed by the country as many wars at the time were motivated by the desire to capture people for the slave trade. Consequently, trade boomed as people could move about freely to engage in other productive ventures. In education, Western formal education was introduced. The Bible and dictionary were also translated into the local languages, the work of Zimmerman and Christaller

MISSIONARIES: AGENTS OF CHANGE

Dr. Kofi Baku

The objective of the mission of European missionaries to Ghana and Africa (for that matter) according to Dr. Baku, Head of the History Department of the University of Ghana, was one of civilization and redemption of the “heathen” African. The initial reception of the indigenous people to this was negative, and understandably so as they did not consider themselves as heathens, and neither were their customs barbaric, backward,



uncivilized or describable in similar derogatory terms. They rather perceived Western culture as impinging on their traditional ways of life. This,

being worthy of note. The Christian missionaries introduced new crops and improved methods of farming and in so doing increased food production. The health needs of the people were also catered for with the establishment of health facilities. These, combined with the Christian virtues of pietism, purposefulness and hard work, improved the quality of life of the people. Social mobility became easier as people through hard work could easily acquire wealth for themselves leading to new urbanized elite.

The work of the missionaries on the other hand, divided the communities as converts were separated from their communities and settled in exclusive areas referred to as Salem (Jerusalem), “Kpodzi” (elevated ground) etc. These converts were made to look down upon their customs and traditions which were labeled as pagan. Even their local names had to be abandoned for so-called Christian names.

Noting that the impact of the work of the missionaries went beyond the Gold Coast to the present, he gave an account of one William Kwasi Ofori of Vakpo whose conversion to Christianity and the benefits derived therefrom has had a positive impact on his descendants up till date. He therefore called for studies on the impact of missionary activities to extend beyond converts to all descendants.

DO NOT IGNORE AFRICAN WORLD VIEW

Rev. Prof. Asamoah Gyadu

Religion is a non-negotiable aspect of African life which is evident in the integral role it plays in all aspects of Ghanaian life. And as such, as argued by some earlier writers like Philip Jenkins and E.A. Asamoah ignoring the African world view would just make a hypocrite of the African Christian. Rev. Prof. Asamoah Gyadu of the Trinity Theological Seminary was speaking on the topic, *From Religious Dogma to Religious Charismatism: Continuities and changes in religious practice in Ghana*.

This is manifested in sports, politics, business etc. He cited as an example how the management of the now defunct Ghana Airways, instead of finding practical solutions to the problems facing the company, resorted to prayers during its crisis. “The basic persistent trait of African existence is religion”, he said.

The Christian church has witnessed some transformations from mainline (Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Anglican etc.) to Pentecostal and Charismatic. The Charismatic churches, a breakaway from the mainline churches, seek to address the African world view and are, thus, very popular with the people. It emphasizes dogma with experience and rituals. For the African the existence of evil spirits is a reality and what he or she needs is how to



combat them. The Charismatic churches' response has been not to deny their existence but rather to affirm the power of Jesus and not deities which the people rely on as the solution.

Rev. Gyadu said that in the post-independence era, the attitude of the missionaries and their disciples towards Ghanaian culture was one of negation owing to the denial of the existence of witches, charms and local deities. As a result of this dogmatic stand there was little prayer for the sick and a lack of vibrant spiritual ministry to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the people. That, in a way, undermined the work of missions. The congregations of mission churches drifted to the new independent churches where they were ministered to and taught to fight evil through spiritual warfare prayer. People joined the spiritual churches because these churches provided the indigenous ecclesiastical context and enjoyed freer expression.

The Pentecostal movement has become a potent force in the nation's religious landscape,

greatly influencing contemporary Ghana, especially the young. The mainline churches are, however, not oblivious of this threat and have initiated some attempts to address this. For instance, the Presbyterian Church, in 1965, set up a Synod Committee to examine issues such as speaking in “tongues”, all-night vigils and revelations which characterize the services of the charismatic churches. The Methodist Church, in 1965, also expressed similar concerns. Some of these mainline churches, such as the Presbyterian, Methodist and Catholic have gradually incorporated charismatic evangelistic ministry and the phenomena.

INVOLVE MUSLIM WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING

Dr. Rabiatu Ammah



Dr. Rabiatu Ammah of the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana expressed her expectations in the 21st century of Muslim women whose position she described as being on the “periphery of the periphery”, the periphery being the position occupied by their male counterparts.

The impact of the Muslim woman hitherto had not been greatly felt because of the absence of formal structures or a unified body to articulate their views. Their failure to gain formal education was another factor. Women have been married off as wives thus depriving them of education.

When they gained education which usually was in the Koranic schools, the kind acquired was not enough to prepare them for the job market. Others have been discouraged from assuming leadership positions because of ignorance of the teachings of the religion as they are made to believe that it is against the tenets of the religion for women to take up positions in leadership.

Addressing the topic *Changing faces of Moslem women in Ghana*, she said nonetheless Muslim women have made significant contributions to society as dutiful wives and mothers. Those in the informal sector are well-known for their delicious dishes such as “waakye”, “fula” etc. They form self-help groups known as “zumuchi” who come to lend financial and moral support to each other on occasions as “yayi”.

However, since the 1980s there have been some dramatic changes in the position of Muslim women. She gave as examples evidence of these changes what she termed the “zongolisation” of the Universities, i.e. the increasing number of Muslims and

Muslim women, for that matter, in the universities. The bewilderment expressed by a twelve-year old boy when he saw her driving a car also signified this change. The changes are also visible in the number of Muslim women occupying leadership positions e.g. on the Hajj board.

She mentioned, among the agents of this change, the National Council on Women and Development, the 31st December Women's Movement, Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Ghana.

She expressed the hope that the next fifty years would see more Muslim women at the helm of affairs playing very instrumental roles. She believed that this could be attained through more women acquiring education and engaging in economically viable ventures.

CHANGING FACES OF WOMEN IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Prof. Brigid Sackey

Professor Brigid Sackey of the Institute of African Studies of the



University of Ghana examined the position of women in the Catholic Church. The vigorous and uncompromising stand of the Catholic Church on the ordination of women as priests is well-known. Interesting though is the high reverence the church accords a woman, Mary, mother of Jesus.

She pointed out that the Catholic Church has witnessed some developments in the role of women over recent years. Amongst these are female altar servants or mass servers, women giving communion and the relaxation of the rules for nuns such as the wearing of the habit, acquiring education in various disciplines and engaging in economic ventures.

She gives as a likely antecedent for these transformations the role of women in African traditional religion. Women in traditional religion play such influential roles as priestesses, deities and even God is known to be a female or to possess feminine qualities, hence names such *Mawulisa* and *Attanaa Nyonmo* amongst the

Fon of Dahomey and Ga of Ghana, respectively. The Catholic Church's respect and encouragement to Africans to use culture to evangelize may have influenced these "borrowings or appropriations" from African traditional religion for women to be given more roles in the church.

In spite of these developments however, there are some challenges confronting the greater roles being given women in the church. These come from those who argue that giving women such roles is sacrilegious. Others argue that allowing women to perform the functions of altar servants would affect the number of men in the church eligible for priesthood. Furthermore, it would also serve as justification for continued disregard for Papal authority. Therefore, though there have been some improvements in the status of women in the Catholic Church, there are still more hurdles to overcome to achieve more responsibility for women in the church.

made great sacrifices for the establishment of the church", she said.

Defining the Western Church as comprising those referred to as "mainline, historical or orthodox" churches, she gave a four generational sketch of her own family from her grandmother to her daughter to illustrate the changing roles of women in the Western church.

She described the first generation (i.e. that of her grandmother) as being devoted to the church. The church was their life and their social existence depended on it. The second generation, the pillars of the church, formed the Women's Fellowship aimed at bringing Christian women together to, among other things, be obedient to Christ and worship him faithfully and build a christian home. The third generation had little time for the church because of other administrative responsibilities. They had to teach, nurse as well as, in some cases, engage in political, advocacy and academic work. They paid for things to be done instead of doing it themselves. Amongst this generation, the pastor's wife did not become the automatic president of the Women's Fellowship as used to be the case and this led to leadership development as other people had to be trained to assume such leadership positions. The fourth generation witnessed more active women's participation in the church, which included the

WOMEN MUST BE MORE ASSERTIVE AND ADVOCATE CHANGE

Prof. Mercy Amba Oduyoye



Prof. Mercy Amba Oduyoye from Trinity Theological Seminary and Director of women in Religion and Culture Programme in her introduction paid glowing tribute to the first generation women who were founding members of the Women's Fellowship. "They

ordination of women as priests. Women also became more involved in the governance of the church.

Despite these changing roles of women over the years, the leadership structures of these Western churches still remain largely male-dominated. To address this imbalance, the patriarchal ethos of our society needs to be challenged. This calls for cultivating the men and “men-identified” women, i.e. those who always want to please men to recognize that women have something positive to offer. New theologies need to be crafted and more women enrolled in the Bible schools.

According to Prof. Oduyoye the church can move forward only if it is ready and open to a re-appraisal of its doctrine, culture biases and tradition. “Women must be more assertive and advocate change,” she added.

LET US DIALOGUE, AFRIKANIA MISSION AND OTHER RELIGIONS

Kwame Zulu Shabazz



Mr. Zulu Shabazz of the Department of Anthropology, Harvard College, USA has called for dialogue between Africans and African-Americans to appreciate the spiritual attachment the latter has to Africa.

Speaking at a roundtable conference on the topic,

Religious movements in Ghana: The Afrikania Mission, he looked at the emergence of new religious movements in Africa. He categorized this into Afro-hybrid and Afro-centric groups. Whilst the first category tried to incorporate some African cultural elements into Christianity or

espouse a positive attitude to some cultural practices, the Afro-centric religious movements adopted African traditional religion and tried to reform or modernize it. Among the former could be classified the works of Bishop Sarpong, the Catholic Archbishop of Kumasi. The Afrikania Mission is a typical example of the latter. He then proceeded to give the background of the Afrikania Mission. It was formed in 1983 by Osofo Okomfo Dr. Damuah, a former Catholic priest. Following his death there was a split resulting in the formation of the Fihankra movement led by Nana Akpan.

Apart from its trans-national pan-African link this religion also has immense significance for African-Americans who have strong emotional attachment to the motherland. This experience could be likened to the Christian born-again experience. To appreciate the deep sense of belonging to the motherland felt by African-American which is expressed either through African clothing, name or religion, there was the need for interaction between Africans at home and those in the Diaspora.

CHURCHES URGED TO RESPECT TRADITIONAL LAWS

Numo Oblafo Akotia Omaetu III and Numo Gbelenfo



The Ga Blafo Wulomo of the Ga Traditional Area, Numo Oblafo Akotia Omaetu III, said if traditionalists have been able to accommodate all religions, then the other religions should be able to do the same. It is possible for all religions to co-exist peacefully without conflict for the building of a strong democratic nation, he noted.

Commenting on the role of women in traditional religion he pointed out that traditional religion does not blame women for the origin of sin or the downfall of man as done by Christianity, referring to Eve and Delilah in the Bible and their role in the downfall of Adam and Samson. Women are highly regarded in

traditional religion, holding such influential positions as priestesses and actively participating in religious rituals.

Quoting Numbers 28:7, he questioned Christian objections to the pouring of libation by traditionalists as a form of prayer. He called for

understanding and appreciation of other religions so we can live in harmony.

Numo Gbelenfo, Wulomo of Osu, also stressed the need for spiritual leaders to appreciate religious tolerance. He urged churches to abide by traditional laws such as the ban on noise-making to promote harmony.

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH PREREQUISITE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Rev. Dr. A.A. Akrong



Rev. Dr. A.A. Akrong of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, and the Police Church, appealed for a new sense of national identity, high public morality, good work ethics and building of democratic values to achieve the goals of nation building which we seek. "Moral and spiritual growth is a

prerequisite for development," he said.

Speaking on the topic, *The Relationship between the Church and State: from Independence to Present*, Rev. Dr. Akrong noted that the relationship is symbiotic. Both work together for the welfare of society.

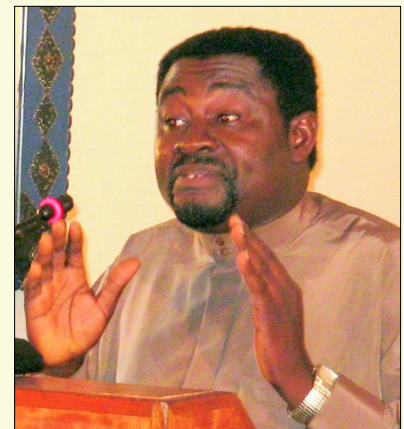
The regeneration of moral life which the church seeks to achieve is essential to the development of the state. Stating that morality cannot be over-emphasized, he stressed the need to strengthen public morality and national identity.

Recounting briefly the relationship between the church and the state since independence, he observed this had changed over the years under the various regimes depending on the policies adopted or implemented as the church sought to play the role of watchdog in society especially under military rule.

He said the church has a duty to practise a servant-leadership role as an example to society.

CONSTANT DIALOGUE: THE WAY FORWARD

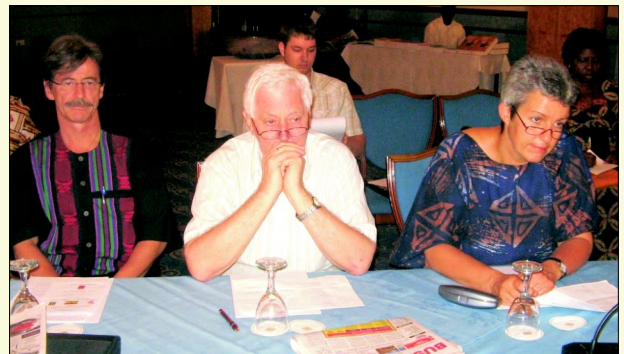
Rev. Ahmed Agyei



Rev. Ahmed Agyei of the Straightway Chapel Int., a Muslim converted to Christianity, requested for such a forum at least every three years and not fifty years as on the occasion of the country's golden jubilee. For the way forward was constant dialogue amongst all faiths so we could better appreciate and understand each other.

PARTICIPANTS LIST

1. Abaari Rabiatsu (Hajia)
2. Ababio Kofi Effa (Rev. Dr.) **Chairman**
3. Abdallah Zuleya (Ms.)
4. Abdul-Wahab A. (Mr.)
5. Abubakar Abdulai (Mr.)
6. Addo Emmanuel I.K. (Very Rev)
7. Addo-Fening R. (Prof)
8. Adentwi-Eyiah Louis (Mr.)
9. Adjei Irene (Ms.)
10. Adojoh Bin Bishop
11. Adotey Edem (Mr.) **Rapporteur**
12. Adu-Gyamfi Samuel (Mr.)
13. Adzo Akpalu (Miss)
14. Agbevem Michael (Mr.)
15. Akpalu Elizabeth (Mrs.)
16. Akrong A. A. (Rev. Dr) **Presenter**
17. Alhassan M.B. (Alhaji)
18. Ali Fatima Bintu (Ms.)
19. Alibah Martha (Ms)
20. Aliwinag. Emil (Mr.)
21. Allotey Daniyal (Mr.)
22. Ammah Rabiatsu (Dr.) **Presenter**
23. Archampong Doris (Mrs.)
24. Armiywo Shaibu (Sheikh)
25. Aryeetey Abubakad (Mr.)
26. Asamoah-Gyadu K. (Rev. Prof) **Presenter**
27. Asiamah Elias K. (Rev. Dr.)
28. Awiah Patricia C. (Mrs.) **Rapporteur**
29. Baku Kofi (Dr.) **Presenter**
30. Becuer Stefave (Ms)
31. Berg Martin (Mr.)
32. Biedieke Werner (Ms.)
33. Cobbinah Michael (Mr.)
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46. Gyimah Charity D. (Ms.)
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48. Hernaes Per (Prof.)
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61. Nely Zeinab (Ms.)
62. Nii Dr. Kpobi Tettey-Tsuru III
63. Nii Kotey Dsani
64. Nketia Priscilla Naana (Rev. Dr.) **Rapporteur**
65. Nketiah Eric Sakyi (Mr.)
66. Novieto Ernestina E. (Mrs.)
67. Numo Oblafo A. Omaetu III **Presenter**
68. Nuumo Gbelenfo **Chairman**
69. Nyaaba Ali Yakubu (Mr.)
70. Odotei Irene K. (Prof) **Convener**
71. Obeng Asamoah Peter (Mr.) **Rapporteur**
72. Oduyoye Mercy Amba (Prof) **Presenter**
73. Yantey Godfred (Mr.)
74. Ofosu-Mensah Ababio (Mr.)
75. Okyeame Borquaye
76. Okyeami Aplaku
77. Olaw Hooe Jon (Mr.)
78. Osman Bin Umar (Mr.)
79. Osman Habiba (Ms.)
80. Otuteye Enoch A. (Mr.)
81. Owusu Kofi (Rev.)
82. Paintsil George (Mr.)
83. Pedersen Flemming Bjørk (H.E.) **Guest of Honour**
84. Perbi Akosua (Dr. Mrs.)
85. Quarshie B. Y. (Rev. Dr.) **Chairman**
86. Quarshie John Abedu (Rev. Dr.)
87. Riss Nurudeen B. (Mr.)
88. Sabald Peter (Dr.)
89. Sackey Brigid (Prof.) **Presenter**
90. Samwini Nathan I. (Rev. Dr.) **Presenter**
91. Schirripa Pino (Dr.)
92. Sebald (Dr.)
93. Sey Mac (Sheikh Dr.)
94. Shabbazz Kingsley B. (Mr.)
95. Shardow Barikisu (Ms.)
96. Suleman Fatimatu (Ms.)
97. Shabbazz Zulu Kwame **Presenter**



THE SOCIETY

The Historical Society in Ghana was founded in 1951 under the auspices of leading scholars and nationalists such as John D. Fage, A. A. Kwapong, Albert Adu Boahen, J. B. Danquah, Kobina Sekyi, Nana Kobina Nketsia and others.

Membership of the society is drawn from among historians, archaeologists, linguists and from ancillary disciplines, and includes university lecturers and students from the six public universities and teachers in Secondary Schools and Training Colleges.

The society ran a journal, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, which was the leading journal on Ghanaian history. It also published the *Ghana Notes and Queries* and *Teachers Journal*, which also served as a scholarly forum for secondary school history teachers.

The society became defunct in 1983 during the general decline of scholarship because of economic decay. It was revived in only 2001. The revived Historical Society of Ghana has since then resumed publication of the *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*. It has also held widely publicized annual conferences.

VISION

To deepen national appreciation of the relevance of history to understanding Ghana's past and present; to highlight the centrality of history to the production of knowledge in general; and to reveal history's influence in everyday life.

MISSION

To strengthen the discipline of history at the Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Senior High Schools, Basic Schools and other institutions of learning through repackaging historical knowledge to reflect its changing role in the context of national development. To inculcate an interest in history and publicise the history and heritage of Ghana in the wider Ghanaian public through lectures, symposia, seminars, colloquia, conversations, conferences and publication. To this end, the Historical Society of Ghana sponsors research, assists in the training of historians in universities and secondary schools, offers scholarships, runs an annual conference open to the general public, and publishes journals, books, theses and documentaries.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

The day-to-day activities of the society are in the hands of a council; namely

Prof. (Mrs.) Irene K. Odotei - President
Prof. Benedict Der - Vice President
Dr. Kofi Baku - Secretary
Dr. (Mrs.) Wilhelmina Donkoh - Assistant Secretary
Dr. (Mrs.) Akosua Perbi - Treasurer
Prof. Robert Addo-Fening
Prof. Divine Edem Kobla Amenumey
Prof Emmanuel Acheampong
Prof. Kwamena-Poh
Prof. Kofi Darkwah
Prof Per Hernaes
Dr. Yaw Boadi-Siaw
Mr. Cliff Maasole
Mr. H. Asamoah

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, linguists, lawyers, bankers, archivists, chiefs, librarians and ordinary citizens of Ghana and scholars working on Ghana.

APPLY TO BE A MEMBER

Registering to be a member of the society is simple, send your application to

The Historical Society of Ghana
University of Ghana
Department of History
P. O. Box LG 12
Legon, Accra.
Ghana, West Africa.

Or Register online at

www.historicalsofghana.org

Tel: +233-302-502397

Fax: +233-302-502397

Email Address: historicalsociety@ymail.com or asafo@ghana.com

The Historical Society of Ghana welcomes sponsorships and contributions in cash, kind or services for general or specific projects. Please call the Administrator on 0302-502397 or contact us via our email address.